

FOR RELEASE: June 15, 2001

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**MMS Publishes Draft Environmental Impact Statement on Proposed
Delineation Drilling Activity on Undeveloped Leases
Offshore Santa Barbara County, California.
*Public Hearings Scheduled***

The Interior Department's Minerals Management Service (MMS) today published a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on proposed delineation drilling offshore Santa Barbara County, California. The Draft EIS evaluates impacts of proposed drilling activities on four undeveloped Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) units offshore Santa Barbara County, California. These units are Gato Canyon, in the western Santa Barbara Channel; Bonito, offshore Point Conception; and Purisma Point and Point Sal, both located in the offshore Santa Maria Basin along northern Santa Barbara County. The proposed activities include the sequential drilling of four to five delineation wells on the four separate units by a single semi-submersible drilling vessel. Delineation is a type of exploration drilling activity that involves drilling a well to gather additional information about the nature and extent of oil and gas resources in areas where discoveries have already been made.

Copies of the DEIS are available on the MMS website at www.mms.gov/omm/pacific. Review copies are also available at selected public libraries throughout Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo Counties. A hard copy / CD-ROM version of the DEIS can be requested by contacting Ms. Janice Hall at 1-800-672-2627.

Comments on the Draft EIS are due to the MMS by August 13, 2001.

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, MMS will hold two public hearings to obtain feedback on the content of the Draft EIS. These hearings will be held at the following locations:

SANTA BARBARA, CA

July 10, 2001

1:00 PM – 5:00 PM and 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Fess Parker's Doubletree Inn

633 East Cabrillo Blvd.

Santa Barbara, California

SANTA MARIA, CA

July 12, 2001

1:00 PM – 5:00 PM and 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Ethel Pope Auditorium

901 S. Broadway St.

Santa Maria, California

The public is strongly encouraged to provide input on the Draft EIS by conventional mail or email. Respondents should include a name and mailing address with their comments:

Mail **name, mailing address, and comments** to:

**Minerals Management Service Pacific OCS Region
Attn: Delineation Drilling Activities Draft EIS
770 Paseo Camarillo, Camarillo, CA 93010**

Email **name, mailing address, and comments** to:

DelineationDrillingEIS@mms.gov

The four OCS units on which the drilling is proposed have been previously explored under Exploration Plans (EP's) approved by the MMS and found consistent with the California Coastal Management Plan by the California Coastal Commission (CCC). Discoveries of significant quantities of hydrocarbons were found on all four units. The approved EP's identify proposed well locations that have received CCC consistency concurrence but, to date, have not been drilled. Previously, 28 exploration wells have been drilled in the area where activities are proposed. Because a number of years have elapsed since these approvals, the MMS is requiring the operators of the leases to update the previously approved EP's through revisions.

As operators decide to pursue future development of the subject units subsequent to the proposed delineation drilling, detailed Development and Production Plans (DPP's) will be prepared by the operators and submitted to the MMS for approval. The DPP's would be subjected to separate National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analyses and would be submitted to the CCC for California Coastal Management Plan consistency review.

The development of a draft EIS for exploratory or delineation activities is unprecedented in the Minerals Management Service. The development of the EIS and the inclusion of an extensive cumulative analysis of the impacts of the hypothetical development of all 36 currently undeveloped leases was performed in response to concerns expressed by and commitments made to California Governor Gray Davis and California Coastal Commission Chair Sara Wan by the Department and the MMS in 1999.

MMS is the federal agency in the U.S. Department of the Interior that manages the nation's oil, natural gas and other mineral resources on the outer continental shelf in federal offshore waters. The agency also collects, accounts for and disburses mineral revenues from federal and Indian leases. These collections totaled nearly \$8 billion last year and more than \$110 billion since the agency was created in 1982. Annually, nearly \$1 billion from those revenues go into the Land and Water Conservation Fund for the acquisition and development of state and federal park and recreation lands.

-MMS-PACIFIC-

Visit the MMS website at: www.mms.gov